

# The Student-Writer

A Little Talk Every Month with Those  
Interested in the Technique of Literature.

Published from the Workshop of Willard E. Hawkins,  
1835 Champa Street, Denver, Colorado.

Volume VI Number 5

May, 1921

50c a Year, 3 Years \$1

## THE LITERARY SUPREME COURT

VIEWES expressed in a letter and its answer published under the title of "Why Write?" in The Student-Writer for March have prompted a number of readers to express their opinions on the subject. One of the most interesting of these communications received by the editor is published herewith. At its conclusion the editor airs a few reflections of his own.

Editor The Student-Writer:

Your "Letter from a Discouraged Scribbler" and answer thereto in the March number move me to make a few observations—as a reader rather than a writer of fiction.

I am strongly of the opinion that magazine editors are not infallible; that they make many mistakes in judging what is good for or acceptable to the reading public.

I have two literary friends whose rejected manuscripts I have tried to read without personal bias and have found immensely interesting. I cannot understand why such stories should ever have been rejected. In theme they are vital, forceful, reasonable, gripping, and in execution they conform to all rules of good literature. And I have turned from these stories to the magazines rejecting them and found within their pages the veriest kind of literary rot; stories tedious, long-drawn out and mostly pointless; or if with a point, one based upon some preconceived idea, oftener wrong than right, or some popular prejudice that ought long ago to have been allowed to die.

The rejection slips that have accompanied my friends' stories on their return trip have invariably stated that the fact of return is not to be taken as proof that the stories are "without merit"; but give no clue as to why they were returned. And the fact that so many are accepted that have no "merit" leads the unprejudiced reader to but one conclusion, and that is that the editor lacks a fine perception of what is "merit."

Entered as second-class matter April 21, 1916, at the post office at Denver, Colo.  
Single copies 5 cents. Foreign subscriptions 75 cents; 3 years \$1.50.

Of course the editor is just plain human like the rest of us, and liable to err, but I fear that the fact that he is the court of last resort, that neither the writer nor the reading public can go back of his decision, leads him into the comfortable, though mistaken belief that he is always right and that both writer and public are satisfied with his decisions.

If this be not true, if editors do not make mistakes, how can we account for the universal experience of the writers of worthwhile stories, of having their work returned again and again before finally finding a publisher? And how account for the further fact that when a writer has at last broken into print his rejected stories are often accepted by the very same editors that once turned them down?

So let the "Discouraged Scribbler" take what crumb of comfort he can from the inescapable conclusion that the rejection of his work is as liable to come from a lack of literary judgment on the part of the editor as from a lack of literary "merit" on his own part. This crumb of comfort is small, I know, since the editor still holds the place of court of last resort and none may reach the public until he gives the word. But I have often thought that if it were possible to gather together a volume of rejected manuscripts it might be far more interesting than many of the accepted ones that clutter the shelves of the booksellers—and the minds of the people.

Denver, Colorado.

MARY L. GEFFS.

### *Reflections by W. E. H.*

Undoubtedly it is true that many stories of merit are rejected because the editor doesn't realize their worth. But when every editor who might conceivably consider the story for publication turns it down—when all the editors fail to discover any merit in the tale—then it is safe to assume that it is not an overwhelming work of genius.

The fact must be taken into consideration that in order to win and hold a place as editor of a widely circulated magazine, a man or woman must have rather superior qualifications. The editor may not be infallible, but he occupies his position because he has a degree of special fitness for it. The same "survival of the fittest" rule prevails here that tends to bring the best soldier to the head of the battalion, the best available executive to the management of a department store, or the best all-round lawyer to the head of his profession.

The editor holds his position because he worked up to it, and because those in charge of the publishing firm's destinies were brought to realize, by watching him over a long period of time,

that he has special qualifications as an editor. Hence, it is preposterous to assume that editors as a whole are men and women of exceptionally poor judgment.

Of course mistakes will occur. A poorly qualified man may for a time occupy an editor's chair. But it is safe to assume that editors, taken collectively, are qualified for what they are paid to do—to exercise discrimination in the judgment of literary wares.

In view of this, it hardly seems possible that a really good manuscript will go unrecognized if the author or his agent employs ordinary initiative in bringing it to the editorial attention.

Suppose, for example, that it is a type of story which might be deemed suitable for any one of twelve specified magazines. We will say that it is an exceptionally good story—one that the readers of this particular class of magazines would appreciate.

Now it may happen that the first editor to whom the story is submitted will be so lacking in judgment as to refuse it. It might even happen that three or four would be insensible of its merit. But does it seem possible that every one of the twelve would exercise equally poor judgment? Remember, these twelve men are qualified experts. A good story would surely meet with appreciation by some one, even in a group of ordinary men.

Remember, also, that it needs only one favorable editorial opinion out of the twelve to accord the story recognition. The verdict of eleven may be against it, but if one approves, the story will see the light.

Under this system the poor story is more likely to be accepted than the good one to be rejected—in the ultimate analysis. It is not unlikely that one editor out of a given twelve will make an error in judging the poor story and will accept it. The point is that it is very unlikely that *all* would err with reference to rejecting a good story.

The situation may, it is true, justify the criticism that magazines publish a quantity of worthless material. Very likely they do. Send a mediocre story around long enough and, through one editor's lapse in judgment, it is likely to be accepted.

This argument does not, of course, take into consideration some factor that may definitely bar a good story from acceptance, such as, for example, the fact that it deals with a subject against which the public is known to be prejudiced. If the story involves a controversial theme—capital vs. labor, religion, or race prejudice, for example—it may be unsuccessful in the markets despite its intrinsic merit.

Neither are we taking into consideration the fact that the story may be of a type that has no definite field, or that is sub-

mitted to the class of magazines to which it does not belong. No writer has a right to complain because he or she has submitted a child's story unsuccessfully to the adult magazines, or a religious story to the "raey" magazines.

If, then, the story is good, and has a logical flow, its chances of being accepted are exceptionally favorable. The author, in fact, has a much better chance of success than a lawyer has of winning any given case before a jury, because the lawyer must convince every one of the twelve men who pass upon his arguments that he is right; the story-writer, assuming that there are twelve editors to whom he may logically send his story, need only to convince one of them of the merit of his offering. No matter if the other eleven are against him, he need not worry because it needs only one editor to sign an acceptance.

The writer has a better chance even than the lawyer has on an appeal to the higher courts, because a majority vote of the seven judges who may form such a court is required to win a case, whereas the writer wins if he garners a minority vote of one.

No, I haven't much patience with the complaint that good stories won't sell. If stories don't sell it is because of one out of three things: Either they belong to a type of literature for which there is no demand, or they are radically defective in some way, or they haven't been systematically submitted to all the possible markets.

The last of these things, nine times out of ten, is the real trouble. Too many authors grow discouraged if a story is rejected once, twice or even a half dozen times. They decide that their stories are no good, or else that the editors are lacking in judgment, without having allowed their "evidence" to go before all the members of the supreme court of contemporary literature—the editors.

The low price of this indispensable guide makes it easy for those who have the early editions to discard them when later editions are issued.

NEW, REVISED EDITION JUST OFF THE PRESS

THE  
STUDENT-WRITER'S

## HANDY MARKET LIST

Price,  
25 Cents

Listing conveniently more than 300 periodical markets for manuscripts, with addresses corrected to date of publication and brief indication of the type of material used by each.

Given Free With

1 year's subscription (new or renewal) to The Student-Writer at...	\$ .50
3 years' subscription to The Student-Writer, at.....	1.00
1 copy of "Helps for Student-Writers," at.....	1.00
Combination of 1 year's subscription and copy of book, at.....	1.25
Combination of 3 years' subscription and copy of book, at.....	1.75

## MAKING WORDS PLAY DOUBLE

(Continued from April)

Frequently the author is confronted by a necessity for stating a dry fact or describing some commonplace incident. Its dull features may be covered by avoiding a direct statement of what occurred. Note how Octavus Roy Cohen fought shy of telling us in so many words what happened, in the following passage, which is taken from "Of in the Silly Night," (Saturday Evening Post, March 12, 1921):

Mezanine leaned forward and spoke gently through the tube:

"Temus!"

"Huh?"

"I mos' earne'sly desiahs, Temus, that you stops heah fo' a few minutes. You c'n hesitate by the side of the road. I craves to indulge in a little se'ious dialogue with you."

"Y-y-you want I should stop?"

"Uh-huh! Stop!"

John Wrigle stopped. The thing was not accomplished in the most approved fashion, but at least it was effective. The shiny bumper in

### The Supervision Story-Writing Course

For those who desire to make progress in literary work, the Supervision Story-Writing course is especially recommended, because it enables us to give students thorough help and to work with them from foundation to completed structure.

The fee for the full course is \$100. This may be paid at the rate of \$10.00 a month for ten months, or \$25.00 at the beginning of each quarter. If paid in advance, the fee is discounted to \$80.00.

At least a full year's instruction is guaranteed.

Students who discontinue payments before completing the course are given instruction to the full value of whatever sum has been paid.

It is not necessary that the work be completed within a year's time, or any specified period, though we have found that students who work regularly and uninterruptedly make best progress. The course is adapted to the individual needs of the student. Naturally a beginner will require assignments, assistance, and suggestions differing from those needed by the writer of experience.

Write for details.

### Another Form of Story-Writing Course

The most convenient method of obtaining a course of instruction from the Student-Writer staff is to make an advance deposit covering a series of criticisms. Substantial discounts from the regular rates are offered under this plan, as follows:

A deposit of \$10.00 will entitle the client to 10 per cent discount; \$15.00 to 15 per cent discount; \$20.00 to 20 per cent discount; \$25.00 to 25 per cent discount from regular criticism rates.

For example, if client has made a deposit of \$25.00 and submits a 5,000-word story for criticism, the charge against the deposit balance will be \$3.00 instead of the regular fee of \$4.00. Statement showing amount to client's credit is mailed with each criticism.

These discounts apply only to prose manuscripts of 10,000 words or less. On longer work a discount has already been figured.

Making a deposit of \$25.00 or less for criticism service enables the student writer to take a liberal course in fiction writing at reasonable cost.

Address The Student-Writer, 1835 Champa Street, Denver, Colorado.

front of the car took up a good deal of the shock, and fortunately John hit on his shoulders at the conclusion of the second somersault and so escaped the shower of glass which followed him in his flight.

After all, it wasn't his fault. John was a good driver and if Mezanine had not distracted his attention he certainly would have seen the stump in time to avoid it.

Effective use of suggestion in "In Pleasant Places," by Philip Owen (*The Smart Set* for March, 1921), adds a flavor of piquancy that lifts the tale from the dull level of mere narration. For example, note how in the following quoted paragraph a journey by railroad is suggested although the fact is not once stated in so many words.

It was beginning to get dark. The lights in the factories were twinkling like stars. "First call for dinner—dinner served in the rear." Well, it was too early now; he'd wait a little while, and then when he'd finished he'd be nearly home. Ah there were the lights now. "Just this bag, George." There was Donegan's oyster bay, too. "Ogden! Ogden!"

In fact, the very denouement of the story is revealed by suggestion. The earlier paragraphs inform the reader that Carrington, the central character, is in love with Alice Merriton. While in the West, Carrington receives a telegram that Alice is dangerously ill. He arrives home to discover what? The answer is suggested in the following paragraph:

Carrington felt confused. The library seemed so changed somehow. It was so quiet. Just the same furniture and everything, and yet—There was a great deal of stir in the house, people doing this and that, but doing it so quietly. There was Miss Evans now; she had been the one who took care of Alice. She looked very capable. So damned quiet here. Just those faint sounds of someone moving around upstairs, someone taking pains not to make any noise. What were they so scared of making a noise for, anyway? It couldn't do any harm—now....

The reader is left to his own deductions as to the outcome of Alice's illness, but who save the dullest could fail to deduce that she had died?

The question the reader will ask after being made subtly aware of the death of Carrington's sweetheart is: "How did he take it?"

The answer is suggested—not baldly stated—in a conversation between Carrington and the nurse who had attended his fiancée through her illness.

"Why, I wanted to thank you for what you did for Alice"—Carrington said.

"Why, I am sure, I only—Oh, it's so dreadful. She was so young."

Are you in touch with your fellow writers—their activities, achievements, methods?

### THE LITERARY GOSSIP MONGER,

owned and edited by Hattie Horner Louthan,  
is devoted to the interests of Colorado writers, both professional  
and amateur. 3600 Raleigh St.,  
50 cents the year, 5 cents the copy DENVER, COLORADO

"I've never happened to see you around Ogden before," he resumed.

"Oh, no. I just came over here a while ago."

"You're here for keeps, then?"

"I guess so."

"I suppose you stay here in town now?"

"Yes, I live at the Nurses' Home. A lot of us stay there."

As the girl left the room Carrington reached in his pocket for a little leather-covered address book that he carried there. He opened the book and on one of the pages he wrote carefully, "Miss Evans, Nurses' Home, Winter street."

All in all, it is suggestion that gives piquancy, life, or "pep" to style. When an editor says of a certain author that he has "style," he very likely means that the author has the faculty of suggesting more than he says.

Unless a passage thus conveys to the reader a richer meaning than appears on the surface, it is quite certain to leave the impression of being "flat." More writers err in the matter of inflicting upon their readers "dull-thud" statements, dreary explanations, and detailed descriptions than in any other feature of narration.

They're not satisfied with going just far enough. They're not satisfied with telling the reader what it is necessary for him to know, and no more.

They insist upon telling not only that John buys Number Nine shoes, but that he has a pair of feet on which he wears them.

—W. E. H.

Statement of the Ownership, Management, Circulation, etc., Required by the Act of Congress of Aug. 24, 1912.

THE STUDENT-WRITER, published monthly at Denver, Colo., for April, 1921

Before me, a notary in and for the state of Colorado aforesaid, personally appeared Willard E. Hawkins, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the business manager of the Student-Writer, Denver, Colo., and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management and circulation, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor and manager are: Publisher, Willard E. Hawkins, 1835 Champa street, Denver, Colo.; Editor, Willard E. Hawkins, 1835 Champa street, Denver, Colo.; Managing Editor, none; Manager, none.

2. That the owners are: Willard E. Hawkins, Denver, Colorado.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning

or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

WILLARD E. HAWKINS, Editor.  
Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of April, 1921.

RALPH B. DERGANCE  
My commission expires Nov. 21, 1921



## A Nominal Investment in The Student-Writer's Criticism Service May Easily Bridge the Gap Between Failure and Success for You

### PROSE CRITICISM RATES

For Each Manuscript of—

2,000 words or less.....	\$2.00
2,500 words or less.....	2.50
3,000 words or less.....	3.00
4,000 words or less.....	3.50
5,000 words or less.....	4.00
7,500 words or less.....	4.50
10,000 words or less.....	5.00
Longer manuscripts, each 10,000 words.....	4.00

(Thus 20,000 words will be \$8.00; 50,000 words, \$20.00, etc.)

**Discounts:** Upon two manuscripts submitted or paid for at one time, 10 per cent; upon three, 15 per cent; upon four, 20 per cent; upon five or more, 25 per cent.

(Thus a 3,000 word and a 4,000 word manuscript submitted separately would total \$6.50; paid for together in advance they total \$5.85.)

See also discounts for advance deposits offered on page 5.

**THE LITERARY REVISION SERVICE** of The Student-Writer Workshop never fails to give satisfaction. One letter received says: "I have been groping for words all morning to try to tell you how much I appreciated the work you put on my two pieces. I don't know of anything that is more encouraging and stimulating to a beginner. I spent last evening studying your corrections. Certainly you have a very generous attitude toward the beginner, who must be exasperating. I am sure you are patience itself, and I am very grateful."

### PROSE LITERARY REVISION.

With typing, per thousand words.. 2.00

Without typing, per thousand wds. 1.50

Long manuscripts subject to estimate.

### PROSE TYPING (with editing.)

Per thousand words (carbon copy) 1.00

### VERSE CRITICISM RATES

20 lines or less (without typing)...\$1.00

Additional lines, each..... .06

### VERSE TYPING.

Per line, 1 cent, Minimum..... .25

### All Fees Payable in Advance.

**Return postage** should accompany manuscripts sent for typing or criticism. No responsibility is assumed for manuscripts lost in transit.

## The Student-Writer Workshop,

1835 CHAMPA STREET.

DENVER, COLORADO.

## An Indispensable Text-Book

# Helps For Student-Writers

By WILLARD E. HAWKINS

Price, \$1.00

The chapters on plot building, viewpoint, style, unity, suspense, characterization, and other phases of short-story building contain information and hints that writers will search for vainly in other text-books.

**Contents:** Can We Afford to be Original?—Have a Standard of Style.—An Aid to Standardization.—Plot and Climax Essentials.—Naming the Characters.—Photoplays or Fiction?—The Attitude of Mind.—"Snowballing" a Plot.—The Stone Wall of Talent.—Why Strive for Unity.—The Precipice of Suspense.—Fixing the Viewpoint.—Word Lenses.—The Place of Technique.—Creative Characterization.—The Law of Rhythmic Development.—"He Said" and "She Said."—The Boiler and the Whistle.—Hackneyed Plots.—The Purpose of Fiction.

The Student-Writer Workshop, 1835 Champa Street, Denver, Colo.